

St Mary's CofE Voluntary Controlled Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125149
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	328300
Inspection date	24 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Joan Lindsay

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	67
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robin Taylor-Hunt
Headteacher	Miss Gillian Boreham
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Shackleford Road Shackleford Godalming GU8 6AE
Telephone number	01483 414749

Age group	4–7
Inspection date	24 June 2009
Inspection number	328300

Fax number

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Age group 4-7

Inspection date 24 June 2009

Inspection number 328300

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated:

- what the school is doing to bring writing standards up to the levels of reading and mathematics
- how well the school promotes community cohesion, especially in relation to cultural and ethnic diversity.

Evidence was gathered from analysis of the pupils' progress, scrutiny of the current standards of their work and observations of lessons. Discussions were held with pupils, the headteacher, other leaders and managers and members of the governing body. The parent questionnaires were also analysed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a small village school, with an Early Years Foundation Stage accepting children into a Reception class. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there are very few from minority ethnic groups or at the early stage of learning English. Very few pupils have free school meals. There are fewer than average who have a learning difficulty and/or disability and none who have a statement of special educational need.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Pupils not only reach very high levels of academic achievement but, as one parent stated, the school 'nurtures children and builds their self-confidence to become well-rounded and confident'. Parents, whose support adds much to their children's learning, are very positive about the school and particularly the very high level of pastoral care their children receive.

Children start school at levels that are slightly above what would be expected for their age, although there is a very wide range of ability. They make extremely good progress in Reception, especially in the way they become independent and in how they relate to each other. Progress through the rest of the school is equally rapid so that, in national assessments at the end of Year 2, a very high proportion consistently exceeds the expected levels in reading and mathematics. Fewer reach the higher levels in writing, although figures are still well above the national average. The school is focusing more on developing writing skills through various initiatives such as talking more about different subjects and developing pupils' vocabulary to give them the tools to write well. This is beginning to have an impact, especially for the younger pupils. Indications are that standards overall for the current Year 2 have risen from their already very high levels. This is a considerable achievement given the expected year-on-year variations that are normally seen with relatively small groups. Pupils who have a learning difficulty and/or disability are extremely well supported, so make the same outstanding progress as their peers.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are outstanding. The recent introduction of a stronger focus on their social and emotional development from when they start in Reception through to the end of Year 2 has had a very positive impact on the way pupils respect those around them. Behaviour throughout the school is excellent, as pupils are extremely well, but kindly, managed by all adults. Consequently, bullying, racist incidents and exclusions are almost unheard of and pupils feel completely secure and very happy in school. Pupils obviously love coming to school and have a great enthusiasm for all aspects. They are currently particularly enthused by the large musical instruments that enhance the playground, that were chosen by the active and proud school council. Their enjoyment of school, linked with the support of parents, is reflected in excellent attendance levels. Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to lead healthy lives, as evidenced by the recent award of the Activemark. Because pupils have such high levels of basic skills and maturity, they are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall with the first three aspects very strong. However, pupils do not have a clear understanding of diversity in the United Kingdom beyond the school, as the promotion of community cohesion is only satisfactory.

There is outstanding teaching throughout the school and this, coupled with an excellent, well-planned curriculum, has led to exceptionally high standards. Lessons are very well planned to challenge and meet the needs of all pupils. There is strong focus on what pupils should learn but there is not always enough involvement of pupils in evaluating how well they have done themselves. Lessons are made fun and the three-year rolling programme means that themes run through the school. For example, while Reception children were building a castle and role-playing being knights, older pupils were pretending to be estate agents writing a description of a castle to sell. Pupils benefit from a good range of clubs and activities, and lessons are also enhanced through more use of information and communication technology, both improvements since the last inspection report. The care, guidance and support pupils receive are outstanding.

In this small village school every pupil is known extremely well by all those who work there and the school also makes very good use of outside agencies to give specific support. Safeguarding procedures are robust. Academic support and guidance are also very strong and contribute to the consistently excellent achievement of pupils. For example, regular assessment highlights where extra support may be required.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school shared by all staff. In this small school inevitably everyone has multiple responsibilities, but there is a great sense of sharing and team effort towards a common goal. This is reflected in the way there is a joint commitment to improving writing throughout the school, by introducing new initiatives and developing the curriculum. As a result, although standards are already very high in the school, there is no complacency and so there is an outstanding capacity to improve further. Governors fulfil their duties well as they are knowledgeable, supportive and increasingly more challenging. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Pupils have some knowledge of other faiths and are very sensitive to the needs of others, for example through charity fund-raising. However, although they are involved in village life, through activities such as dancing at the summer fete, they have not been taught enough about diversity in ethnicity and culture in the United Kingdom, or the differences in lifestyles in communities other than their own.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children settle quickly when they start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Their levels of attainment are above what would be expected for their age overall when they start. However, there are variations in the range of their individual ability, and between different aspects of their learning. For example, when they begin school, their skills in linking sounds and letters are relatively weak. Several parents commented on how well their children were developing academically and personally with one comment reflecting many: 'I cannot think they could have made a better start to school life.' Children of all abilities make very rapid progress because of outstanding teaching and very high-quality support from the teaching assistant. The curriculum, which is extremely well planned, helps them to learn through an excellent balance of teacher-led and child-chosen activities. Children love their activities which they approach with great enthusiasm. For example, they thoroughly enjoy deciding on which role they will take in castle-building, or talking about the item they have brought for 'show and tell'. They quickly learn to respect others and listen raptly not only to the adults but to each other. Their welfare is a very high priority. The outdoor area is used very well and the children have free access to choose activities outside as well as indoors, which helps develop their independence as well as their learning. However, they have too few opportunities for mark-making outdoors, given the relative weakness of their writing skills. The headteacher and the experienced Early Years Foundation Stage teacher work extremely well together to ensure excellent leadership and management.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing so that they are nearer those reached in reading and mathematics.
- Improve the school's promotion of community cohesion, to enable pupils to have a better understanding of others from different cultures, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

06 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's CofE Voluntary Controlled Infant School, Godalming, GU8 6AE

Thank you very much for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school, which is an outstanding one. We enjoyed attending your lessons and assembly, having lunch with you and talking to the school council.

You obviously really love coming to school and achieve excellent results, especially in your reading and your mathematics, because of the outstanding teaching and the way the school is led and managed. Your lessons are lots of fun. You are very clear about how to keep healthy and you feel really safe in school because all the adults look after you so well. Your behaviour is excellent and you all mix so well together because you are encouraged to think of others.

So that your school can continue to get even better, I have asked the teachers to improve your writing skills so that they are as good as your reading and mathematics and also to help you get to know and understand more about all the different types of people who live outside your area.

You can help your school by continuing to behave so well and working as hard as you can.

Thank you once again for being so helpful and friendly and best wishes for your future.

Yours faithfully

Joan Lindsay

Lead Inspector